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ABSTRACT

Designed to provide specific, practical help for educators in starting or improving school public relations programs, this guide emphasizes that a school district must have a public relations plan for each of its special programs--Title I, Title IX, Title IV-C, education of the handicapped, gifted and talented programs, and others. These special programs have increased the need for support and understanding by staff members, students, parents, and the community. This guide tells how to develop plans to meet the special needs of these programs. Ideas are presented for communicating with parents, school staff, students, nonparents, senior citizens, government officials, the police, and the media. Methods of gaining feedback on the success or failure of public relations efforts are outlined. The appendices contain eight different examples of communication materials. (Author/MLF)

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BASIC SCHOOL PR KIT

BASIC SCHOOL PR GUIDE

PR For Special Programs

EA 015 220

One in a series of eight school public relations guides which contain concise, tested and practical ideas.

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National School Public Relations Association

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Introduction

NSPRA's **Basic School PR Kit,** of which this guide is a part, is designed to provide specific, practical help for educators in starting or improving school PR programs. The Kit has been developed in response to the hundreds of requests for help NSPRA receives each year. Material on vital public relations topics is presented in the most concise, usable format possible.

The basic concept of public relations is explained on cassette tape by Edward L. Bernays, the man who pioneered the field of public relations in the 1920s. Important school PR topics are covered in detail in eight tightly-written guides. Additional materials are included in a resource packet containing public relations standards, proven ideas that work, and a PR planning guide and worksheet.

Altogether, the **Basic School PR Kit** is a short course in school PR fundamentals, a refresher for existing programs, a ready reference for dealing with problems that arise and a resource for anyone working to build public confidence in education.

This guide, *PR For Special Programs,* emphasizes that a school district must have a PR plan for each of its special programs — Title I, Title IX, Title IV-C, education of the handicapped, gifted and talented programs, etc. These special programs have increased the need for support and understanding by staff members, students, parents and the community. This guide tells how to develop plans to meet the special needs of these special programs.

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Chapter 1
The Need for Public Relations For Special Programs

"What's so special about special education?" asks a bulletin from Allegheny Intermediate Unit Schools in Pittsburgh, Pa. As harried administrators, teachers and support personnel know only too well, this question is asked numerous times about other special programs by thousands of concerned or confused and sometimes angry citizens all over the nation.

Confronted by dozens of such programs, many with strange-sounding names or titles ending in Roman numerals, there is small wonder that parents and citizens are perplexed about the meaning of it all. Sometimes, they are joined in their confusion by school staff members.

In view of the confusion and the need for support from staff members, students, parents and other publics, one of the critical tasks for school personnel is to cut cleanly through the maze of titles and exotic names to clear away as much of the fog as possible. There is little hope for support of programs that are not understood.

There Are Lots Of Special Programs

School systems have many special programs, some of them required by law. For example, the South Carolina legislature states: "The General Assembly finds that it is necessary and proper to provide an appropriate education for all handicapped children and youth enrolled in public schools or eligible for enrollment therein."

On June 3, 1975, the Pennsylvania State Board of Education adopted a revised set of special education regulations which assures the right of all school-aged exceptional persons, including the mentally and physically handicapped and the gifted and talented, to an appropriate education.

"This means that all exceptional persons have the right to a free public program of education and/or training which is designed to

meet his or her individual needs," according to a brochure on the subject published by the Pennsylvania State Department of Education's Division of Special Education.

OTHER SPECIAL PROGRAMS

1. Career Education
2. Child Find
3. Vocational Education
4. Immunization
5. Kindergarten Registration

What's In It For Me?

Sometimes, answering the age-old question is a tough assignment for school administrators, communications officers and staff members. However, with thoughtful planning it is possible to build support for special programs.

A first step toward building support is to spell out in clear and unmistakable terms why the program is needed and just what it can reasonably be expected to do. We will discuss this subject later.

Support Is Easy To Develop For Some Special Programs

For example, developing support for a campaign aimed at promoting good practices in caring for one's teeth is about as difficult as slicing into a hot, juicy, apple pie when hungry. Likewise, developing support for the observance of "Dental Health Week" presents few problems. The benefits from such programs are obvious.

Other special programs for which it is easy to develop support include:

1. Martin Luther King's Birthday (especially in urban school districts)
2. Brotherhood Week
3. American Education Week
4. National Library Week

Some Special Programs Are Complex And Controversial

While actual fighting in the streets appears to have all but ceased, except for a few isolated school systems where violence persists, some school administrators are still experiencing difficulty in attempts to develop support for school desegregation programs. In fairness it should be pointed out that the increasing complexity involved in desegregating certain school systems has caused a decline even among advocates of school desegregation. At present, some anti-desegregation groups include blacks as well as whites; and liberals as well as conservatives.

In like manner, support for special education programs is becoming difficult to develop among various publics. The controversial and confusing application of guidelines frequently creates friction between parent and teacher groups, taxpayer groups and others, as these remarks indicate:

"I'm all for the right of every child to an education," raged one angry, frustrated parent, "but there is little hope that an education can change appreciably the lives of some severely handicapped children. Meanwhile, badly-needed money is being diverted from programs for children who can be helped," she said. It is becoming hard to convince such parents to support these special programs.

There are other programs which require special emphasis to build support:

1. Vandalism Prevention Campaigns
2. Title I
3. Title IX

Happily, a straightforward, organized approach works in developing public relations for all kinds of programs — and that's what this booklet is all about.

Planning For Special Program PR — Getting Ready

First, let's take a hard look at the program. During World War II, a field artillery company, in an attempt to save gasoline, placed a sign over the door of the building where motor vehicles were kept. The sign read: "Is this trip necessary?"

The question, among others, is a good one to ask when looking at a special program you are preparing to "sell" the public. Here are some additional questions:

1. What is the program?
2. What is it supposed to do?
3. Why was it started? When?
4. Who is involved?
5. What is its "track record?"
6. Is the program meeting the needs of the public? (Compile the facts first).
7. Does it need improving before you try to develop public support?
8. Is the program worth public support?

Remember, the heart of public relations is **action,** seeing that public needs are being met. Shape up your program **before** carrying it to the public.

The message has been said in many ways. All of the admonitions essentially have the same meaning:

1. Find out the need that the program is supposed to meet.
2. Check again to make sure that what you have found out is accurate.
3. If necessary, make adjustments to bring the program in line with the need to be met.
4. Carry the program to your publics.

Who are our publics? The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) in its *Building-Level Workshop Kit* states: "While we often talk about 'the public' or 'the general public' or 'THEM,' these terms are not very helpful as we consider ways to improve school communications. There is simply no single, effective way to communicate with the total 'public' at once."

School systems generally divide their publics into internal and external groups, with the internal group including the staff and those directly associated with the school building. The external public usually includes those groups outside the school who are indirectly associated with the system or school.

Internal Publics — Tell The Staff First

"The cook at —— school lives on my street, and she said . . ." Sound familiar? If not, it may come as a surprise to know that many times your external publics find out about you and your school programs from a teacher, a cook, a custodian . . .

Often, none of these staff members are sufficiently informed to talk about the topic under consideration.

The NSPRA publication *Building Public Confidence in YOUR Schools* warns, "No one is more detrimental to a school district's image than an uninformed employee, who spends less than 20 percent of his or her life each year at work and more than 80 percent out in the community."

A sign in the office of a friend thunders: "If You Don't Understand it, Oppose it!" Many uninformed staff members follow that philosophy, making their opposition to school programs known out in the community.

Stressing the importance of internal communications, NSPRA's editors say informed staff members are the most universally overlooked instruments for improving or restoring public confidence in schools.

An informed and supportive faculty and staff can be respected, accurate conveyors of school-related information.

A parting thought: don't forget to ask students. Survey after survey indicates that students are the major source of information about the schools for many parents.

These special publics are frequently forgotten when it comes to information about special programs and could well be the very element that spells success or failure.

External Publics

Your external publics are more often than not inclined to oppose issues or programs they do not understand. A Gallup Poll, authorized by the National School Boards Association, indicates

that in the absence of information, attitudes are often negative or apathetic.

"When there is communication there is understanding and, often downright support!" declares Gary Marx, Associate Executive Director, Department of Communications, American Association of School Administrators.

In his book, *Radio, Your Publics are Listening,* Marx writes, "For any problem there must be a solution. In this case, the solution seems to be improved communication."

What Does Each Public Need To Know?

Once your publics have been identified, a formal or an informal needs assessment should be conducted to determine what is already known and what needs to be made known. The process can be costly, or it can be included at no cost in the staff's daily routine.

Surveys are one means of gathering information. Two important key publics to be surveyed are parents of students in special programs, and teachers who will have the students in their classes. But, don't overlook parents of those not included in the program and other staff members. Their attitudes and comments can mean support or failure in many cases.

Ellen Henderson, who is in charge of Public Information for Lexington District 5, in Ballentine, S.C., organized parents of students in gifted education programs, then proceeded to survey those in the organization, called PAGE 5, Parents Active in Gifted Education.

You may want to organize a committee that includes teachers, support personnel, (such as psychologists, therapists, etc.), program directors, bus drivers, and non-parent volunteers, and then hold brainstorming sessions to determine what information they feel their **publics** want to know.

Other less formal ways of assessing the informational needs of your publics include asking switchboard operators to keep a log for a brief period on the kinds of questions asked about the program after it has been announced.

Questions asked by the representatives of the media give an excellent clue to what the public needs and wants to know. Include informal questionnaires in your newsletters and put them where they will be seen by your special publics.

For example, day care centers are good places to leave questionnaires about kindergarten registration campaigns. According to

Ellen Henderson, orthopedic surgeons' and other physicians' offices are fine places to leave surveys for programs for orthopedically handicapped students; the offices of doctors who specialize in diseases of the eye, ear, nose and throat are good places to leave surveys or questionnaires for parents of hearing impaired or visually impaired students.

You may want to try anticipating some questions if you do not mind "living dangerously" and prepare information that may be useful. For example:

> During the current heightened awareness of the legal implications involved in school programs, as well as in programs of other agencies, public and private, parents and staff may want detailed information about their rights and responsibilities under the law. This is particularly true of special education programs.
>
> Parents of academically talented children may want to know the criteria for selecting the students who will take part in programs for the gifted. Indeed, they may want to have a voice in setting up the selection standards.
>
> Finally, parents of average students, as well as cost-conscious non-parents, may demand to know whether programs for average students will be affected by the new special programs and whether funds will be diverted from regular classes to pay for new programs.

Chapter 2
Tailor Your Communication Techniques

Providing information is a major part of the administrative PR function for special programs. However, there will be times when attitudes must be changed. These times require a different PR function for administrators. We will look at both of these components of PR for special programs.

Mass Media

The mass media are commonly accepted as the cheapest, most efficient means for reaching large numbers of people in a short period of time. For this reason, many school districts rely heavily on newspapers, radio and television to keep their publics informed.

For example, when schools must be closed during mid-morning because of an unexpectedly heavy snow fall in Greenville County School District in Greenville, S.C., the radio and television stations are called and the announcement read to reporters. In the space of a few short minutes, parents know that soon they can expect their children to be sent home. In addition, motorists have also been alerted to watch out for children and school buses as snow hampers visibility over slippery streets.

These mass communication techniques can be translated easily for use in disseminating information about special programs. In announcing a new program, you could ask a knowledgeable parent or staff member involved in the program to make a call to a "dee jay" (radio disc jockey) during morning "drive time" (usually between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m.). During the call, have the dee jay ask questions designed to bring out the information you have determined is needed.

If schools are campaigning for funds to buy new band uniforms, you may persuade a radio "personality" to play part of a selection recorded during a band rehearsal or concert. After the

selection has been played, a plea is made for financial support, either from band boosters or other special publics. Televised pleas can be arranged in a similar manner.

Brochures also are a useful mass communications tool. They can be used in a variety of ways to present information about special programs. Brochures can be relatively inexpensive to produce and require no supervision once they have been printed and properly distributed. "They just lie there selling," states a pleased school administrator.

Other tools that can effectively be used when communicating with large segments of the public include:

- Books
- Films, slide/sound presentations
- Bulletins
- Flyers
- Memos
- News Releases
- Newsletters
- Speeches

Interpersonal Communications

But mass communications may not always be helpful in reaching all of your publics for special programs. Other methods must be used when attitudes may need changing regarding such programs as education of the handicapped, Title I, bond levies and finance campaigns or desegregation and integration.

In Greenville, seminars on the operation of the school district were conducted as a means of changing the somewhat negative attitude of realtors. During the seminar, key district personnel briefly discussed their areas of responsibility, including instructional services, curriculum, busing, discipline, student progress, and the district's "special programs."

Later, during a "let's take the gloves off" session, realtors asked tough questions. School district officials answered with openness and candor.

The seminar marked the beginning of a period of unprecedented cooperation between the board of realtors and the school system, with each side possessing a much more informed point of view about the other's concerns and priorities. Since the seminars, realtors have volunteered financial assistance in the publication of two district brochures and have inquired about other opportunities to provide help.

During court-ordered desegregation in Nashville and Davidson County (Tenn.) Metropolitan Public Schools in 1972, telephone information centers were set up and kept open beyond normal working hours and during some weekends. The telephones were

manned by staff members, teachers, selected substitute teachers and parents. The centers proved invaluable in quelling rumors and feeding accurate information to anxious parents and citizens.

Said E. T. Carothers, then supervisor of public relations, "While the district still has many problems and will continue to have some, I believe our school system faced fewer problems during the period because we kept the citizenry informed."

Telephone conversations are advocated as valuable interpersonal communications techniques. Other interpersonal techniques include:

- Media briefing sessions
- Panel discussions
- Staff conferences
- Workshops
- Meetings with clergy and business people
- Block meetings in homes
- Small group coffees with school administrators, parents and community residents.

How To Do It — Communicating With Your Publics

COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR PARENTS

"The best way I know to overcome and change difficult people is by involving them in positive activities," says the principal of a Title I school in Oakland, California.

The principal's statement is true of many people, not only those who are difficult. Often schools turn off or actually produce troublesome parents by "giving them the cold shoulder" when they try to get problems solved or questions answered.

Since some programs have their own built-in mechanisms for producing hostile parents, the alert school administrator will try to provide positive channels of communication for parents.

To begin with, make parents a part of the program by appointing them to all committees whether or not their membership is a program requirement. They should be invited to help in setting goals and objectives that are clearly defined and in keeping with district policy, and federal and state laws.

Parents' opinions should be sought actively, if program changes occur because of changes in the law, changes in regulations or new requirements.

There are a number of ways to provide a systematic, two-way

communications process between parents and schools conducting special programs. Here is a mixture of suggestions from various sources:

1. Organize volunteer "home visitors" to go into parents' homes and keep them informed. The "visitors" also provide feedback from their talks with parents.
2. Have staff members make periodic home visits to discuss children's progress and gain feedback.
3. Have coffees in homes and invite parents to attend whose children are in special programs. Plan to answer questions as well as give information you think pertinent. Make sure that the programs are held during varying times of day or evening to accommodate parents who work shifts or odd hours.
4. Have small group luncheons at school and invite parents to eat with teachers, key personnel, and you.
5. Keep a pot of coffee warming in your office for parents who have appointments.
6. Use all occasions to listen for feedback useful in determining where improvements in your communications program may be needed.
7. Enlist the support of churches or community agencies such as the YWCA and YMCA where vans or church buses may be borrowed to bring parents who do not have transportation to PTA or other meetings.
8. Have teachers and other staff members send parents who may not read well, simply worded notes, memos, and newsletters printed in large type.
9. Distribute special campaign flyers such as "Child Find," in welfare and food stamp offices as well as in grocery stores, churches, beauty and barber shops, dry cleaning stores and bars.
10. Distribute announcements about kindergarten registration campaigns in day care centers and pediatricians' offices as well as through the usual television, radio and newspaper outlets.
11. Hold seminars and workshops for parents of special children. Have program specialists and teachers present to explain parent and student rights and responsibilities as well as the rights and responsibilities of the school.
12. Hold workshops to ensure that the office staff's telephone manners are courteous, polite, and concerned and all telephone requests for information about the programs or special problems are answered, preferably on the day the request is received.

A final word: Print a brochure, newsletter, or policy manual that outlines for parents the policies, rules or program procedures. As always, the publication should be written in simple language. There are excellent reasons for having written policies. Listen to the words of a parent:

"I don't mind abiding by the same rules that everyone else is expected to abide by, but I don't want you folks making up rules just to punish my child!"

Regulations written when the program begins prevent this kind of feedback. Remember to make sure that policies developed for special programs by state or federal agencies do not violate policies of the district.

COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR STAFF

When making critical decisions about goals and objectives of special programs, it is a good idea to hold school and district staff planning sessions. If you feel that some staff members will be inhibited or intimidated by the presence of others, prepare for a fast free-flowing exchange of ideas by holding a **brainstorming session.**

Since it is imperative that you assemble **all** staff members, including transportation and lunchroom workers, school nurses, aides, as well as teachers, secretaries, program directors and custodians, it is well to keep in mind the following:

If you choose to inform some of your internal publics via newsletter, remember to keep the communication objective, airy, informative, and devoid entirely of educationese. As noted at the

beginning of this booklet, confused publics are sometimes joined in their confusion by perplexed staff members.

Bernadette Bacon, communications specialist with Fulton County (Ga.) Schools, cautions those writing about special programs to:

1. Be prepared to do the necessary research, read the rules and regulations, get a firm grip on the subject.
2. Capsulize; avoid the temptation to write a book.
3. Work closely with the immediate staff of the special program whether preparing a newsletter for internal or external publics.

On the other hand you may want to "discuss" the new program with the staff during a special luncheon. You may wish to point out candidly the problems involved in implementing the program, including a frank discussion of the requirements of the law, and then ask staff for their ideas about communicating the information to other publics.

As in any other survey where the opinions of publics are sought, you as principal or administrator should be prepared to follow through, where possible, in applying the best and most useful ideas.

COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR STUDENTS

Most parents surveyed say they get their information about school by word of mouth. Often, when you look at students you are looking at the "mouth" that shapes your school's image.

Because of this source of information, a harvest rich in benefits can be reaped by having staff members include students in the formative stages of your special program. They should be given a thorough explanation of the program's purpose and should have a voice in decisions regarding the program whenever possible.

The importance of students to the overall school program is underscored in Edina-Morningside, Minn. There, a student board of education, partially elected and partially student council-appointed, meets prior to meetings of the "senior" board to present student concerns to their elders through the superintendent.

Try the following communications ideas:

1. Give news releases regularly to editors of the student newspaper so that students can read about progress, or important developments in your special program.
2. Hold press briefings for student editors and reporters to make sure they understand what the program is about.

3. Be candid in your responses if your special program (such as school desegregation) is controversial.
4. Appoint students to advisory committees.
5. Arrange for frequent opportunities to talk with students during formal and informal occasions.
6. Have the program director and teachers eat with students from time to time.
7. Hold discussions for a cross section of students involved in desegregation, Title I, Title IX or anti-vandalism campaigns.
8. Have teachers and directors periodically go over with students the program achievements and progress toward goals.
9. Provide ample opportunities in the program to honor, publicly, students who distinguish themselves through achievement, leadership, or in other areas.

COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR NON-PARENTS

Non-parents now form the highest percentage of the general population. Frequently the information they receive about schools is unfavorable. They cannot be expected to provide volunteer services for special programs, give financial contributions, or other constructive assistance unless they are reached through your own programs. Some methods of reaching this important group are as follows:

1. Send press releases and newsletters to local churches to inform parents and non-parents about school events and board meetings.
2. Visit churches in your school community for Sunday services. Have your presence announced so that those who wish to meet you or ask questions may seek you after the service.
3. Prepare speakers for your special program and have them appear before civic or social groups. You may want to have someone prepare a slide/sound presentation explaining the program so that the message is uniformly presented.
4. Set up meetings of your own and invite groups that include non-parents. Present the speakers: hand out program information.
5. Invite parents and non-parents in the neighborhood to tour the school; have lunch.
6. Invite non-parents to open house, other school functions. Whenever possible, allow them to observe teaching and learning situations.

COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Senior citizens are a valuable resource for assistance with special programs. This special group of non-parents has the time to serve as chaperones or tutors, to visit homes and explain the program to parents who cannot or will not come to the school for first-hand information and serve as volunteers in the programs.

The Gray Panthers (organized senior citizen groups) need not be opposed automatically to ALL school programs, including special ones, because of the possibility of increased tax burdens on the elderly. Frequently these "grandparents" are most supportive when they know the need and realize that other Gray Panthers are supporting the schools their grandchildren are attending.

Here are a number of tips for getting senior citizens involved as **key communicators.** Some of the suggestions also will get them involved in special programs.

1. Visit the senior center in your neighborhood and explain the program's goals and objectives; be sure to explain what it will do for children. Urge them to give their help.
2. If possible, arrange tours so that senior citizens can see the program in operation (this may encourage more volunteer participation).
3. Have a list of the activities where help is needed.
4. Have orientation or training sessions for senior citizen volunteers to avoid misunderstanding about volunteer assignments.
5. Invite senior volunteers to attend school functions as guests.
6. Hold periodic affairs to honor senior volunteers for their invaluable assistance.
7. Keep a file containing the names of senior volunteers so that they may be kept informed of program developments through a steady stream of newsletters, brochures, and memos.

COMMUNICATIONS IDEAS FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

As you know too well, many special programs are mandated by state or federal laws. Because of these mandates, you will want to consider the councilperson, legislator, representative, and any other appropriate elected or appointed official as **one of your most important publics.**

"Since public education receives its support through and by the political system, it is imperative that the administrator be part of the system," says Tom I. Davis, special assistant for public information for the North Carolina State Department of Education. In view of this fact, you should remember to:

1. Invite appointed and elected officials in your school community to meet with advisory councils whenever possible.
2. Explain thoroughly what the program is and why it is needed.
3. Invite officials to view the program in operation. Often the sight of "the special students" who need special help will soften the most hardened bureaucratic heart.
4. Keep the officials continually informed through newsletters and memos clearly and concisely written, about the successes (and failures) of the programs.
5. Have parents, staff and students express their interests, concerns and if possible "appreciation" for the program in writing to state and federal officials. There may even be times when telephone calls are more effective.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE POLICE

Special campaigns such as anti-vandalism and desegregation have the potential for violence from citizens or students. This means the addition of another public, the **law enforcement agencies.** Robert P. Hildrup, former administrator for the Richmond (Va.) Public Schools, says to expect problems and prepare to meet them head on.

"One of the first aspects of the planning process," says Hildrup, "is to talk with the police." He points out that police can check buildings, provide a number for citizens to call should they see suspicious activities around a school building, and give advice on ways to prevent violence.

"Have a high-ranking contact in the police department so you can decide who will make what statement to whom after an incident," advises Hildrup.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA

A veteran city editor once told a new reporter, "When it comes to talking to the media there is sometimes a tendency for bureaucrats to hide their light under a bushel." That statement is true of some school administrators. Because they fear that publicity of any kind will backfire, reflecting unfavorably on their staff, or worse, on themselves, many of these executives fail to approach the media.

If given the opportunity, the media can help get the word out about your special program. So, as soon as you have enough information, hold a press briefing and invite all the media to attend.

During the briefing, be candid. Don't try to gloss over the fact that your program may be controversial. If asked, explain carefully the points where conflict may arise. If there is printed material suitable for sharing, distribute it near the end of the session so that reporters will not be distracted from listening to your presentation. Urge the group to begin building a file for future reference if the program is to continue over a period of time.

If you have assigned a teacher or other staff member to handle information about the program have that person attend the session so that reporters will know whom to call for information. You may want to have the program's full staff attend.

Here are media tips gathered from a variety of sources:

1. Remember to stress the program's purpose and to tell why it is needed.
2. Send announcements and story ideas to reporters on a regular basis.
3. Invite reporters, news directors and editors to take a look first-hand at the program in operation.
4. Avoid using educational jargon; usually newspapers are written at about middle school reading levels.
5. Tell reporters about the good things the program is enabling your school to do for children.
6. Respect deadlines and release news stories as early as possible. If you have an important advisory committee meeting coming up in three weeks, inform reporters right away. Then have someone call again to remind them a day before the meeting is to take place.
7. Hold press briefings alternatively during mornings and afternoons so that no special news outlet is favored.
8. Be sure to have factual information about state and federal funds involved in any special program, and be specific about guidelines and regulations which the district must follow.

Russ Harney, Public Information Officer for Charleston, (S.C.), Schools, describes news as "an aberration," an event that deviates from the normal or standard. All deviations are not pleasant and you may be treated roughly from time to time, but with patience and a good understanding of the needs and operation of news gathering agencies, you will win far more battles than you will lose.

Remember that special programs, even more than on-going school programs, are frequently the focal point of the media and community attention. They are frequently supported by state and federal monies which may result in strong controversial opinions. You can do much toward building support by providing the media with a steady flow of information.

Ideas For Getting PR/Communications Projects Off The Ground

Many perfectly good PR programs die at birth because of a lack of direction. Some of these programs stagger along for a time, but are ineffective because no road map has provided directions for getting from the place where the project began to the place the administrator would like it to go.

To prevent this unhappy state of affairs, editors of the NSPRA *Building Level Workshop Kit* have designed a convenient program outline that presents each step for making your project a success.

To begin with, **name the publics** the project is designed to reach. Next, **state the project** as concisely as possible.

The **purpose** of the project should then be written. For example, "a back-to-school information booth" may have the following purposes:

1. To inform parents of the need to have their children immunized before registering them in kindergarten or first grade.
2. To provide parents with information about ways your school will be affected by a new desegregation program.
3. To gain reaction from parents about a new program which will be introduced in your school.
4. To provide information about price increases in the school lunch program, etc.

Once the purpose has been outlined, begin planning **procedures,** which should include schedules, dates and times, morning, afternoon and evening. In addition, make assignments so that staff and volunteers will know who is responsible for what tasks. For

instance, some staff members or volunteers may be assigned to write copy for brochures and information sheets. Others may be assigned to plan and carry out a publicity campaign, while still others may help locate an ideal site for the booth and arrange for its construction.

Resources for the program may include estimated printing costs, costs for materials to construct a booth, transportation costs for tables and equipment, costs for posters and slides or pictures, etc.

The **timing** of the project should be firmly established so that staff and volunteers, together with the publics to be served, will know the hours the booth is to be manned. Public announcements should be aired repeatedly during the days leading up to the initial opening and during the days the booth is to remain open. Announcements should also be made in all the area newspapers.

Index cards are an excellent, inexpensive way to get anonymous feedback from those who stop at the booth. Aside from questions designed to get reaction about the usefulness of the project, there should be enough space on the card to allow patrons to write questions which could not be answered by those manning the booth. If the patron leaves his name and telephone number, the question should be answered as quickly as possible.

You may want to file the cards for later study. They may contain valuable tips about where your overall communications program is failing.

When the project is ended, do not forget to send thank you notes to staff members and volunteers. You also will want to thank the merchants who allowed you to set up shop in their mall or store (if you choose such a site).

Chapter 3
Evaluating Your Efforts

How will you know your PR activities are helping you gain acceptance for your special program? There are several ways to gain

feedback on the success or failure of your PR efforts, including both formal and informal procedures.

Informal Feedback Ideas

Telephone logs maintained over a specified period of time are an effective way to collect information about the reaction of your publics. If, for example, a secretary records an overwhelming number of requests for information about how children are selected for "mainstreaming" in a special education program, you will be alerted to take steps to increase the flow of information about program guidelines and the selection process.

Another way to get feedback on your PR efforts for special programs lies in "careful listening" during advisory council or PTA meetings, church gatherings, social gatherings, or other places where your publics meet.

A file of news clippings provides insight to media reaction and the coverage of special programs. Attendance figures at advisory council meetings, "coffees," parent groups or similar gatherings can be an accurate barometer of whether you and your staff are doing an adequate job of publicizing and emphasizing the importance of the meetings.

Letters containing praise, criticism, or requests for information provide valuable feedback. At the same time, a high turnover rate among special program staff members and/or parent volunteers may indicate either poor communications somewhere along the line, or signal more serious problems.

More Formal Evaluation Ideas

More formal evaluation procedures could include completion of the statistical reports required for federal and state programs. For instance, Title I programs require schools to provide Parent Advisory Councils with free copies of Title I laws, federal and state regulations and guidelines, and program directives. Advisory council meetings must be publicized widely. Many schools save news clippings as evidence of their compliance.

Grant guidelines call for ongoing communications with parents of Title I students about plans for the following year's project. Reports of activities conducted to meet these objectives can be used as part of a formal evaluation.

Telephone surveys (where volunteers can be used) and written questionnaires are among formal methods used to evaluate programs.

If the district office does not have staff members available to help draft questions which will provide information needed to assess your PR efforts, try a nearby college or university. Staff professors there may be willing to take on the survey as a class project, and assign students to carry out the leg work as part of the assignment.

Assign a staff member to collect as many random comments as possible through various means. These filed comments may prove invaluable when PR plans are being made for other special programs.

Chapter 4
Summary Of Key Points

- A straightforward, organized approach works in developing PR for all special programs.
- Package your "publics" into groups with common needs and interests; then plan ways to communicate with each public. There is no effective way to communicate with the total public at once.
- Be sure to tell the staff first. Often an informed staff is a supportive staff, respected as accurate sources of school information.
- **Uninformed** external publics, like your staff, will be "inclined" to oppose your special programs.
- Before putting any plan into motion, find out what those publics particularly concerned want to know about your program.
- Understand and use different communication techniques for different purposes: use mass media for information and use interpersonal techniques for changing attitudes.
- Let the staff help you with planning. A brainstorming session, properly conducted, is a good way to get many ideas in a short time.

- Once you have established information needs, use a variety of methods to reach your special program publics.
- Develop your PR plan by including the program purpose, work assignments, needed resources, and the length of time needed to carry out the program. Be sure everyone concerned has a copy of the plan.
- Use a variety of approaches to secure feedback about how well your program is being accepted or rejected; formal and informal techniques.
- Evaluate! Your evaluation tools contain "tea leaves" for reading the future and for planning the PR program for your next special program.

APPENDIX A

Prepared by Sam Zimmerman, Director of School/Community Relations
The School District of Greenville County

PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION DAY

RATIONALE:

Each year, staff members are forced to spend large amounts of time on the telephone answering questions from parents and other citizens and students about the opening of school. To allow staff members to continue their work and insure a smooth school opening, it was decided to conduct a Public School Information Day two weeks before school was scheduled to open. The project involved setting up tables containing school information in stores and shopping centers throughout the county. The tables were manned by staff members and volunteers.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Letters were sent by the superintendent to staff members and volunteers informing them of the project and inviting them to take part.

2. The mayors of towns and cities in the county were asked to proclaim the day "Public School Information Day" to give the project official sanction and added publicity.

3. The proclamations and news releases were sent to all news outlets, and to public relations directors in business, industry and public and private agencies. The latter were asked to announce the day in their publications.

4. Area ministers were asked to announce the event from their pulpits.

5. Three one-hour seminars were conducted to acquaint volunteers and staff members with the brochures and newsletters which were to be passed out during the day.

6. Stores and shopping centers were selected and permission gained from owners to set up tables in 37 locations around the county.

7. Visitors to the information tables were encouraged to ask questions and cards were available for replies to complex, or hard-to-answer questions.

8. Staff members and volunteers were requested to return all unused materials to area and district offices. They also were requested to pick up all litter created by traffic around the information tables so that owners would not have to use their staff members to clean up.

RESULTS:

.Large amounts of information were passed on to the public by people whom many of them knew, since staff members and volunteers were selected to serve in the communities in which they live and work.

.The public was impressed that volunteers, teachers and principals were willing to give up their Saturdays to assist with the project.

.The staff received far fewer questions.

.There was a feeling by many that the district is willing and eager to answer any and all questions about its schools.

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF GREENVILLE COUNTY

C I T I Z E N F E E D B A C K

My suggestion for improving the school in my community (be specific): _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I would like more information about: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you would like information sent to you, please write your questions on the reverse side along with your name and address.

APPENDIX C

SOME PRINCIPLES OF GROUP PROCESS

1. If a group is to be used to bring about attitude change, it is important that the persons who are to be changed and those who are to exert influence for change should have a strong sense of belonging to the same group. In other words, change can be brought about more easily from the inside than the outside. You have seen this operate. For example, have you ever resisted when someone on the outside told you how to run your business or your family?

2. A group exerts more influence on attitudes, values, or behaviors which are close to the reason for the group's existence. For example, a business group would be expected to influence a member's business values more than his religious or his family values. In the case of overlapping membership, a propagandist who wanted to change a man's religious values would probably try to approach him as a member of a religious group rather than as a member of a business group.

3. The more a group means to its members, the more influence it can exert on their attitudes, values, and behavior. One's family, for example, can exert more influence than a casual crowd which one joins to watch a sidewalk excavation or a traffic accident. The more one needs a group (to take care of his feelings of loneliness or social inadequancy, for instance) the more likely he is to conform to its standards.

4. The higher the prestige of a member in the eyes of his fellow members, the more influence he can exert on the group. There are many different roles and jobs within a group, and often a complex pattern of influence. But if one can get the most highly respected members of the group to advocate the change he wants made, it is more likely to get group approval.

5. The more clearly all members of a group can be made to feel the need for change, the more likely change is to occur. Likewise, it is important that information about a change be shared by all members of the group. The more nearly, that is, a group can operate like a team with all members participating in important decisions, the more likely change is to be accomplished without serious tensions.

6. The nature of a group is such as to resist deviance on the part of a minority. If an outsider tries to change the attitudes or behavior of a few members of a group in such a way as to make them go counter to group norms, he is likely to encounter severe resistance -- both from the individuals, who value these norms they have accepted, and from the other group members who may punish the deviants by loss of status or exclusion from the group.

7. Change in any part of a group is likely to introduce strain and unbalance in the group as a whole. The only smooth change is accomplished by bringing the group along together. For the propagandist, of course, this is a two-edged sword. He may sometimes wish to introduce disequilibrium into a group, and he can accomplish this by making a few members of the group dissatisfied or rebellious. The strength of a group lies in its unity and its ability to reinforce the values and actions of its individual members.

APPENDIX D

CLOVER PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 400

Parent Advisory Council

Attachment 1

Title I ESEA

DISTRICT PAC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

TITLE I BUILDING PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION

The following suggestions are proposed for the establishment of building parent advisory committees by the Title I District Parent Advisory Council:

1. A meeting for all Title I parents should be held at each Title I school.

2. The meeting should be organized by the building principal and the District Parent Advisory Council representative(s) from that school.

3. The meeting should include an explanation of Title I and an explanation of the duties and functions of building PACs.

4. The resource people used for the explanations in number 3 could be the Title I specialist from that building, the building principal, Judy Margrath (Title I Coordinator) or Harry Sannerud (Title I Director).

5. Ideally, the building PAC should be composed of all Title I parents. If this is not feasible, a nucleus of about ten parents is recommended.

6. The officers at the building level should include a chairperson and a secretary.

7. Three meetings are recommended to be held between January 1975 and June 1975. The first meeting would be to organize the building PAC and allow the parents to observe the Title I project in that school. The second meeting could consist of a Title I question and answer period and a time for parents to suggest program improvements and ways that parents can aid the Title I teacher. The third meeting could consist of a review of next year's Title I applications.

Gladys Reddick
Committee Chairperson
District Parent Advisory Council

FILE II - B

Parent Advisory Council

5214 STEILACOOM BOULEVARD S.W. • LAKEWOOD CENTER, WASHINGTON 98499

APPENDIX E

VIOLENCE AND VANDALISM

CURRENT TRENDS in School Policies & Programs

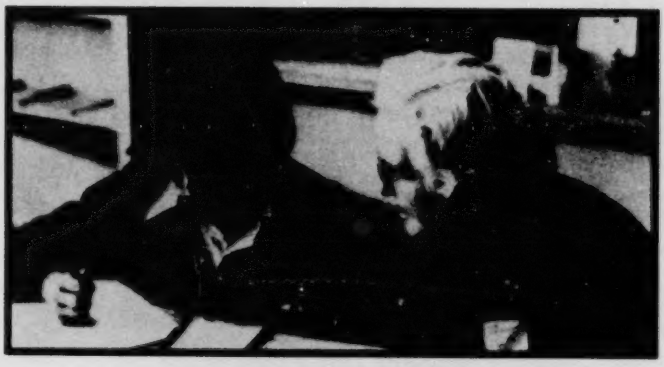
10 Questions for Principals

In Bellevue, Wash., principals are given a list of 10 questions to assist them in making provision for necessary safety and security measures. The questionnaire is contained in the district's manual of "Emergency Situation Procedures," which outlines district policy and applicable state laws on topics ranging from safety and security to pupil conduct and discipline.

The questions are as follows:

1. Are teachers and other key personnel aware of procedures and responsibilities for dealing with a seriously ill or injured child?
2. Are pupils, teachers and staff aware of procedures necessary and their responsibilities in case of an earthquake, fire or flood?
3. Are principals, delegates and key staff members aware of necessary procedures and their responsibilities in case of bomb threats?
4. Has an organization been established in the building to provide for routine supervision of halls, laboratories and grounds?
5. Have procedures been developed to handle unauthorized visitors?
6. Have emergency procedures been developed for major incidents or disorders?
7. Is the chain of command clearly defined and understood by teachers and staff?
8. Have appropriate provisions for supervision and security been planned for each after-hours activity?
9. Do administrators and teachers understand procedures for handling problem students?
10. Are counselors and other key personnel familiar with the district's emergency guidelines?

APPENDIX F



SHARE YOUR GIFT□□□

□ FRIENDSHIP

YOU CAN HELP CHANGE A CHILD'S LIFE BY BEING A FRIEND.
YOU CAN:

- LISTEN TO STUDENTS TALK OR READ
- SHOW YOUR INTEREST IN THEIR WORLD

□ UNDERSTANDING

YOU HAVE HAD A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCES DURING YOUR LIFE.
YOU CAN:

- BE A PAL AND MEET STUDENTS' SPECIAL NEEDS
- SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH THEM

□ WISDOM

YOU HAVE LEARNED MANY THINGS TO RELATE TO STUDENTS.
YOU CAN:

- HELP THEM LEARN THE 3-R'S
- TALK TO THEM ABOUT CAREERS AND HOBBIES

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN A CHILD'S LIFE AND YOUR OWN!

dallas independent school district

APPENDIX G

The Wichita Public School System (USD #259) is committed to the concept of equal opportunity for all individuals. For that reason, the school system will not discriminate on the basis of sex in its employment procedures nor in its operation of educational programs and activities. The Wichita Public School System is required by Title IX of the Education Amendments, Public Law 92-318, not to discriminate on the basis of sex in the above mentioned areas.

• NON-DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

The non-discrimination requirement applies to recruitment, advertising, application, selection, assignment, promotion, demotion, transfer, layoff, termination, benefits, and other conditions of employment for all employees, both full-time and part-time. Title IX does permit, however, consideration of sex if it can be shown that such consideration is essential to successful operation of the employment function concerned. Consideration of sex may be valid, for example, for employing someone who must work in a locker room or toilet facility used only by members of one sex.

• NON-DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Sex will not be used as a basis for determining admission to educational programs of the Wichita Public Schools.

Sex will not be used as a basis for determining a student's access to or participation in any course. Students may be separated on the basis of sex for class activities where the materials and discussion deal exclusively with human sexuality or where physical education classes are engaged in competition in body-contact sports: No course will be offered to only one sex. Sex discrimination in academic or vocational counseling is also prohibited.

Title IX requirements do not apply in any way to the selection or use of textbooks or curricular materials. The Wichita Public School System does recognize, however, that sex stereotyping in curriculum materials is a serious matter; and textbooks and materials considered for use in the school system will be carefully examined for such stereotyping.

• NON-DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Sex will not be used as a basis for preventing a student's participation in extracurricular activities, school organizations, or competitive athletics. Neither local Board of Education policy nor federal regulations, however, require single, co-educational teams for all sports. Where selection is based on competitive skill or the activity involved is a contact sport, athletics may be provided either through separate teams for males and females or through a single team open to both sexes. The school system is not required to spend equal amounts of money on boys' and girls' teams, but must not discriminate on the basis of sex in providing necessary supplies and equipment. It is the desire of the school system to provide the sports and levels of competition which effectively meet the interests and abilities of both boys and girls.

APPENDIX H

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY SPECIAL PROGRAM

THE MACKENZIE AREA PREVENTION PROJECT
Detroit (Mich.) Public Schools
Community-Based Project to Prevent Substance Abuse

The Mackenzie Area Prevention Project (M.A.P.P.) is a community-based, comprehensive project designed to prevent substance abuse among youth aged 8 to 16 in the community surrounding Mackenzie High School (Detroit, Mich.). The project, started July 10, 1979, has a three-year funding commitment from the State Office of Substance Abuse Services to the Detroit Health Department's Bureau of Substance Abuse. The project has two phases:

1. Planning designed to gain community input and develop a proposal with a Community Advisory Board.
2. Implementation of actual prevention programs.

M.A.P.P. is community based in that residents of the entire community have been involved in defining the problems in their community, prioritizing the goals and objectives of the project, learning various prevention options, strategies and resources, and then prioritizing and reviewing actual program content.

Some strategies to be used include a parenting program designed to teach not only basic parenting skills but specific skills in communicating with youth about drugs; workshops for ministers, school teachers and administrators on their needs and roles in substance abuse prevention; as well as troupes of "Prevention Players" who will do skits on substance abuse prevention for their peers, for upper elementary age students and the community at large.

A major part of the project is a media campaign. The campaign has two purposes:

1. It will publicize the project and encourage community involvement and commitment.
2. It is a tool to affect levels of information and attitudes about substance abuse.

The successes of achieving the expectations of the program will be extensively evaluated.

Submitted by:

Joseph Hayden, Ph.D., School-Community Relations Administrator,
Detroit (Mich.) Board of Education - Region III

The main business of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA), formed in 1935, is to help bring about better citizen understanding of the objectives, accomplishments, and needs of schools. NSPRA's mission is to build support for education through responsible public relations and communication.

If the duties of your position call for communicating with the public or others in the field of education, NSPRA membership is a must for you. NSPRA member services include: *PARAGRAPHS* (member newsletter), Public Relations Resource Center, Research Assistance, PR Hotline Counseling Service, Personnel Clearinghouse, National Representation, reduced rates for members at NSPRA's annual National Seminar and a voluntary accreditation program. There are four categories of NSPRA membership: institutional, professional, associate, and student.

Other NSPRA Products, Services and Activities include: *EDUCATION USA, IT STARTS IN THE CLASSROOM* and *FEDERAL FUNDING ALERT* newsletters; workshops and consulting services; special publications and audiovisual materials.

To order additional titles of "*Basic School PR Guides,*" or to obtain information about NSPRA membership, products and services, contact: National School Public Relations Association, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209, (703) 528-5840.